

Personality, Process, & Levels of Development

Susan Rhodes, Dec. 2011

The fixations are all negatives. The worldview I have described as all “positives.” Putting the two sets of terms side by side is mutually illuminating.

— A.G. E. Blake, *The Intelligent Enneagram*, p. 287.

More and more, I see the enneagram both in terms of process and personality, as reflected in my commentary last month on Mary Bast’s article on alchemy and the enneagram (in which I further explored her initial exploration of alchemy as a process associated with the enneagram, whereby each step can be equated with one of the nine enneagram points). *On the process enneagram*, we are tracing the transformation of something from the “raw” state at Point 1 to the “cooked” state at Point 8, with Point 0/9 being the point of (a) origination and (b) integration. *On the personality enneagram*, we are looking at nine points of view that can also be seen as nine core motivations, energy signatures, or personality types.

Of course, it is traditional to think of these points of view as point of fixation: places where the energy gets stuck. And while I take exception to that interpretation, it makes sense in that our point of view is linked to a particular spot on the circle, a spot that is most definitely *fixed* rather than moving. It’s easy to see what is “fixed” as “fixated”; the only difference is that the former refers to the limits imposed by our point of view while the latter refers to *the potentially negative reaction we have to those limits*. To the extent that we believe this negative reaction to be inevitable, a fixed location becomes equivalent to a fixated perspective. Change the belief and we change our situation.

At any rate, comparing the types with the steps is indeed (see Blake’s quote above) mutually illuminating. Because from the personality perspective, it helps us see our type as fixed (innate), rather than fixated. And from a transformational perspective, it helps us see how our path in life is profoundly shaped by the core motivation associated with our type.

This is the same point made in the film *Pleasantville*, where modern teens are magically transported back in time to a 1950s sit-com, where they help the people there—who are stuck in their two-dimensional, black-and-white roles—to become more vibrantly real. Each time a character makes the first really big step towards transformation, he goes from black and white to color. (One poignant touch is the appearance of signs reading “No coloreds allowed” in establishments committed to the old black-and-white paradigm—exactly the same signs that we would have seen in segregationist establishments of that era.) I was moved by the film’s message that no two individuals become real (i.e., transformed) in exactly the same way: the precise nature of our transformational process depends upon our inner nature.

Nevertheless, there are nine steps through which we all proceed in each transformational cycle, steps associated with Points 1 through Point 9. So transformation involves both, that which is *universal* (the nine steps) and that which is *individual* (the nine types). It is in the dynamic interaction of limitation and freedom (what Arthur Koestler refers to as “fixed structures and flexible strategies”) that transformation unfolds.

But transformation is not a given. At any point, there is the potential for things to go wrong. This is something we all intuitively understand, because we all have experiences in life in which a new project (or some kind of inner transformation) starts well but goes off the tracks at some point, due to the arising of some kind of problem. Nathan Bernier discusses the potential problems in pp. 325-333 in *The Enneagram: Symbol of All and Everything* (2003). His focus is on transformation in a generic sense, because that is what the process enneagram strives to model: the process by which transformation occurs, whatever the

context. One of my aims in my writings has been to show how the challenges faced at each point in the process are particularly salient for the type associated with that point (such that the challenges we see at Step 1 are particularly salient for Type 1, etc.; see, e.g., the discussion in Chapter 7 in *Archetypes of the Enneagram*—or the discussion below). My point, as always, is that we are not doomed by the mere existence of our type to miss the mark where these challenges are concerned.

When researching Ken Wilber's books in preparation for my forthcoming book, *The Integral Enneagram*, I discovered three chapters Wilber wrote in *Transformations of Consciousness* (1986) that describe nine stages of transformation (Ch. 3), the pathologies that can occur at each level (Ch. 4), and potential treatments according to level (Ch. 6). The lowest level described = undifferentiated consciousness while the highest = totally integrated consciousness.

The assumption underlying Wilber's approach is that *any level can be either normal or pathological*, from the lowest to the highest. So Wilber presents us with an approach to levels of development in which higher consciousness may or may not be highly correlated with psychological health. He formulated this idea during the mid-1980s when the "guru scandals" of the 1970s and 80s were making spiritual seekers realize that there is no one-to-one relationship between spiritual attainment and psychological health—but that *even advanced practitioners who experienced high states of consciousness (and had presumably transcended ego) were not necessarily balanced*.

In this article, I'll talk about Wilber's approach, break it down by stages, and talk about its implications for enneagram work—both in terms of what we assume about how transformation unfolds and the nature of the barriers we encounter along the way. Included is a detailed breakdown of each point, where I start with both the comments of Wilber and Frank Visser, author of *Ken Wilber: Thought as Passion* (2003). I then comment on the significance of their observations from the perspective of both the process and personality enneagrams. My commentary is in *italics*.

The General Approach

Wilber has broken down stages of development in many ways. His simplest scheme is by three categories: pre-personal, personal, and transpersonal. At the time he is discussing the pathologies possible at each level, along with potential treatments, he has conceived of nine levels, making it possible to break down each major phase into three subphases. So we have nine levels in all.

From an enneagrammatic perspective, this is a pretty interesting organizational scheme, because it obviously lends itself to looking at parallels between Wilber's levels and the nine stages depicted on the process enneagram. And if we know how to tie the process enneagram to the personality enneagram (to see the correspondence between Stage 1 and Type 1, etc.), we can explore the possible ties between Wilber's Fulcrum (Level) 1, the process enneagram's Stage 1, and the personality enneagram's Type 1. In addition, the fact that Wilber has a nine-level developmental scheme allows us to see the parallels, if any, between his approach and that of Don Riso (with later developments from Russ Hudson), who developed a nine-level model to describe the nine types at each of nine levels.

So let's take a look at the characteristics of each level, how pathology manifests at that level, and what can be done to address it. I'll save a discussion of how this scheme compares to that of Riso-Hudson's levels of development for later (along with a discussion of Riso and Hudson's newer strata approach). In the immediate discussion, I focus on the comments of Wilber and Visser on the levels (fulcrums) of development in terms of the life cycle, starting

in childhood and progressing into adulthood, along with my commentary on how these correspond to the nine stages of the process enneagram and the nine types of the personality enneagram.

As we will see, the first four or five levels of development are similar to those described by Piaget and take us to the level of mature adult thinking and even meta-cognition (thinking about thinking). The last three levels as described by Wilber are clearly transpersonal. While the pathologies and therapies described for the lower levels are similar to what we would expect, given the current level of psychological understanding, the pathologies and therapies for higher level maladies are less familiar. So we will accordingly spend more time on them. Please note: the terms *level*, *point*, and *stage* are all used to describe a particular phase in the developmental process.

PRE-PERSONAL PHASE OF DEVELOPMENT

The pre-personal phase corresponds to that part of the human life cycle prior to the emergence of a clearly-delineated sense of self and the ability to reason and exercise judgment. Please note that, as regards the three enneagram types that fall within this phase (Types 1-3), this does not mean that these types are less mature or developed than other types, only that they particularly access the energy available on this level: binary evaluation (Type 1), emotional bonding (Type 2), and practical thinking (Type 3).

Level One: Sensori-physical. Wilber's realm of matter, the senses, and perception. This is the most primitive level of development that occurs during the earliest part of life. Pathologies at this level involve the inability to separate the self from "other." This manifests in severe psychosis which Wilber sees as very difficult to treat, except pharmacologically (perhaps with counseling as an adjunct). Visser's is more specific, talking about the use of sedation for dealing with pathology at so early a phase of development. It occurred to me that we do not need to assume that we're talking only about an adult here; and, if we are talking about an infant or small child, it may be possible to bring about healing with persistent physical holding, affection, and love.

The move from Point 0 to Point 1 on the process enneagram: At the beginning of anything new (life, a new lifetime!), we need a basic way of relating to ourselves and our surrounding, a basic sense that life makes sense: that it is good, not bad. So the impulse is to move toward the good and away from the bad, and it is this impulse that provides a basic (instinctive) orienting response to life. It is this orienting response that becomes the basis for evaluating later choices as to their goodness or badness; so it plays a very important role in our ongoing response to life.

Type 1 on the personality enneagram: Ones are known as "black and white" thinkers, but perhaps it would be more accurate to call them would-be positive thinkers whose desire to move towards the light requires them to identify and avoid its opposite. So a "two-category" approach will also make sense to a One, because it is their natural "modus operandi." However, discriminating Ones will gradually learn how to determine "good" from "bad" using increasingly refined and complex criteria for determining goodness, and in so doing, avoid substituting rigidity for discernment.

Level Two: Emotional-sexual. This is the self at the level of the sexual impulses and emotions. Wilber sees this as the level of the simple "image" mind that requires positive mirroring for healthy development and sees narcissism/grandiosity as the pathology that can take hold at this level. Visser comments that this is a period of emotional development, that

it requires structure and that providing such structure will be a key element in any therapeutic approach.

The move from Point 1 to Point 2 on the process enneagram: *Once there is the sense that life is good, it is possible to take the risk of interacting emotionally with others, especially those closest to us (usually our mothers). But the interactions need to be consistently positive over time (or at least, “good enough”), so that the developing child gradually learns how to mirror herself from interacting with his or her caregiver—a caregiver who knows how to combine love with the setting of limits.*

Type 2 on the personality enneagram: *Twos are the most outwardly emotional type on the enneagram. As a result, they are particularly sensitive to their emotional environment and need adequate emotional support early on in order to develop the kind of firm psychic structures needed to manage their strong emotions. These emotions can potentially be highly differentiated and unselfishly motivated affections, to the extent that the Two is adequately mirrored by loving adults in childhood—or to the degree that they are motivated to do the kind of inner work that allows them to learn how to mirror and nurture themselves without the need to be overly-dependent on others for emotional support.*

Level Three: Representational mind. According to Wilber, the representational mind describes a self that is beginning to work with symbols and concepts. So from his perspective, it is a step up from the image orientation of the previous level. As the self becomes more complex (now possessing instinct, emotion, and rudimentary mental operations), so do its pathologies; this is the level of ordinary neurosis, where instinct can conflict with emotions, emotions with mind, or instinct with mind. Whereas the lowest two levels are more instinctive, this level represents the emergence of more conscious mentation. However, there is still a certain automaticity operating here, although we are on the cusp of higher-level mentation. Visser says that it’s on this level that repression really becomes possible which is why therapy for neurosis often consists of helping people uncover repressed material.

The move from Point 2 to Point 3 on the process enneagram: *The focus here is on acquiring basic competence in living, so that the helplessness at Point 1 which is replaced by dependency at Point 2, can finally be (if not quite left behind) at least temporarily set aside in the interest of establishing a foothold in life. The temptation to suppress instinct and emotion is strong because of the dawning realization that competency is critical for living and must therefore take priority over inner (emotional or instinctual) needs. The focus is on tangible striving and results because at this point, we need to get a clear picture of how life works and how we need to work if we seek to prosper within the parameters of a physical world.*

Type 3 on the personality enneagram: *Threes are known for their focus on striving and aspiration but also their difficulty with taking time for intimacy or with depth in general. But you can’t have depth until you have life experience, which is why Threes are known for their enthusiasm for plunging into concrete, action-oriented projects that yield tangible results. It is only after they have achieved a certain level of competence, material security, and social recognition that Threes feel solidly grounded in life—and ready to turn their attention to the more subtle, intimate, or playful aspects of living.*

PERSONAL LEVEL OF DEVELOPMENT

Wilber observes that those who focus on psychopathology often don’t go beyond Level 3 in their discussion, in part because the pre-personal pathologies are the most debilitating (at least for ordinary people living an ordinary life). However, he makes the point that simply

getting beyond Level 3 in no way guarantees a pathology-free development, because there are increasingly subtler kind of challenges that arise.

Level 4: Script/role thinking. At this level, we are moving to a higher level of mental functioning and deeper reflectivity, which allows us to become aware of both the social roles we play and to understand the role of another. Wilber notes that the conflicts that arise at this point concern the desire to fit in, to belong, and—*particularly*—to understand the rules. This new awareness also brings with it the possibility of consciously manipulating others. Visser notes that this is the point where the self can start to feel quite insecure about itself and how to behave in different social situations and says that script analysis can help by providing tools for becoming more aware of the nature of the roles we play, which can help us become more self-aware.

The move from Point 3 to Point 4 on the process enneagram: Our expanding self-awareness allows us to become aware of another's point of view, which gives rise to a deeper sense of empathy. But it also allows us to realize for the first time that what seemed completely natural in our behavior at Stage 3 in our development actually involved the adoption of a socially-conditioned role—and this is an unsettling realization. A crisis is brewing, because of our newly-discovered awareness of the roles (and games) people play—and that we play. Realizing the “role me,” we realize there must be a “real me”—and that the two are not the same. This discrepancy potentially creates the psychic split that allows the re-emergence of deeper psychic material suppressed at Stage 3; it also initiates a three-step existential crisis that reaches its apex at Stage 6 (see below). However, as Wilber points out, it is helpful at this point to identify the roles, games, and scripts involved in human behavior so that we can begin the processing of sorting out this “role” from the “real.”

Type 4 on the personality enneagram: At some point, Fours become painfully aware of the conditioned nature of the self with which they currently identify, which in turn gives rise to self-critical feelings and an extreme concern with authenticity. This creates the psychic split alluded to above, because they feel as though this knowledge about the conditioned self should enable them to free themselves of social conditioning, which it does not. So the immediate effect of this knowledge is not liberation, but painful feelings of dissonance and shame. Two things can be helpful; first, developing the reflective skills necessary to separate out the authentic from the inauthentic (which is helped by a better understanding of the nature of social roles, according to Wilber); and two, cultivating compassion for both oneself and others, such that we realize that there is nothing wrong with the desire to fit in or the adaptation of behaviors that facilitate social acceptance. However, Fours who try to suppress or deny the split—who try to remain unconscious of their own inner processes—may find themselves suddenly decompensating at some point, because they occupy a place on the circle where that kind of denial is difficult if not impossible.

Level 5: Formal-reflexive mind. Wilber observes that it's at this point that we can begin to “think about thinking.” This kind of meta-cognitive awareness allows for hypothetico-deductive and propositional reasoning, but the plethora of possibilities introduce new levels of complication. Here we confront philosophical problems that are hard to ignore and the need to allow the self to actually emerge as an independent entity. Visser says that there are so many possibilities that arise that it is difficult to make a pragmatic choice. Both Wilber and Visser recommend introspection for sorting out the chaff from the wheat; Wilber additionally makes the point that to be silent at this point is to be absent (worthless), so expressing one's thoughts can bring greater balance. Thus, Wilber sees the value of Socratic dialoguing at this point.

The move from Point 4 to Point 5 on the process enneagram: This is the mid-stage of the existential crisis beginning at Point 4 and the crossover point on the bottom of the enneagram, known as a region of chaos and confusion. It signifies the move from a self-centered perspective to an “other-centered” perspective, simply because the “otherness” of life can no longer be denied. The multiplicity of things and ideas in the world can seem overwhelming, creating the need to get a grip on reality by developing some sort of rationally-based framework. The ability to exchange ideas with others helps develop both the knowledge frameworks necessary to make sense of those ideas and a new, more philosophical way of relating to others (often through the discussion of ideas).

Type 5 on the personality enneagram: Here we see the individual who has a sense of spacious thinking and the ability to reflect deeply on life. However, the ability to break down things into separate categories can result in over-compartmentalization and detachment, not just intellectually, but socially, because everything becomes an object that must be categorized. Too much emphasis on categories can de-emphasize the flow of energy and information between different compartments. Wilber’s comments about expressivity are instructive, because they suggest that it is helpful for Fives—who tend to become lost in abstraction—to make a particular effort to express their ideas to others, because this helps them break out of their solitary world and enter into social communion..

Level 6: Vision-logic. A new, more panoramic kind of logic begins to emerge, a kind of higher-level synthetic or integral awareness that transcends ordinary logic. This is the level that Wilber strives to put forth as a goal, because it represents the point at which we are on the cusp of a new kind of awareness—poised to make the transition from personal to transpersonal consciousness. However, for that same reason, existential concerns come to a head, creating a whole raft of concerns: existential depression, inauthenticity, isolation, aborted self-actualization, and existential anxiety. These problems are ironically the product of the self-beginning to grasp the vastness of life and potentially recoiling from that vastness into overly-conventionalized and (by now) inauthentic/superficial routines. Wilber speaks to the need at this point for seeking out a more humanistic, expansive perspective that can accommodate our newly-emerging centauric awareness. Visser says that our ability to keep opening at this point depends upon knowing there is a valid reason to do so; in order to proceed, we need to know, “What difference does it make?”

The move from Point 5 to Point 6 on the process enneagram: This is the move from an extreme emphasis on compartmentalization and systematization to a higher-order synthesis of ideas that begins to take into account the larger (transpersonal) context. But in order for that synthesis to be effected, it is necessary to begin to open to those inner impulses that can inform our logical sensibilities as they begin to emerge. And this creates a great deal of fear, what Bernier has discussed in connection with the Dweller on the Threshold effect, in which all of our inner demons collectively arise just at the point when we are finally able to transcend them. But it takes tremendous conviction to break through the fear and resistance that arises at this point, which is why faith matters so much: we have to believe that if we open ourselves to ancient fears and an unknown future, life will support that opening. Cultivating common sense, good habits, and social support provides the groundedness and self-confidence we need to engage our fears without feeling overwhelmed by them.

Type 6 on the personality enneagram: Type 6 is the type most associated with issues involving fear, faith, and courage. The foregoing discussion reveals the reasons why: because the Six sits on the point on the circle where there is an incipient leap to a new expanded level of consciousness. As a result, both old and new fears come rushing to the surface of consciousness, creating the kind of anxiety that is hard to ignore. The need for

stability and loyalty from friends and family comes from the understanding that in order to face our deepest fears, we need all the inner and outer support possible. What is often missing from type descriptions is the idea that the fear and anxiety experienced by Sixes is grounded in emergent changes that are inherently unsettling (rather than irrational impulses that lack any real foundation). Of course, from a purely rational perspective, these fears do indeed appear baseless, so long as the Six insists upon clinging to a purely rationalist approach, he or she will probably have a hard time shaking off anxiety. It's the ability to relax into a more intuitive, receptive space that moves us beyond the restrictions of pure logic and allows for a gradual but balanced expansion of consciousness.

TRANSPERSONAL PHASE OF DEVELOPMENT

The move from personal to transpersonal levels takes most of us into unfamiliar territory, which is why Wilber describes the challenges we face in a considerable amount of detail: because they are not the sorts of problems with which we are likely to be familiar. The discussion below will therefore be more detailed than the discussion of pre-personal and personal levels.

Level 7: Psychic level. This is the point, Wilber says, where the kind of abilities associated with the “third eye” begin to emerge: transcendental, transpersonal, or contemplative forms of awareness, also kundalini awakenings. These developments can bring about profound openings, but also the potential for inflation, disorientation, transient psychosis, imbalance due to faulty practice, dark night of the soul, “split-life” goals (spirit vs. earth life problems), pranic disorders, inability of body to handle higher-level energies.

Wilber identifies three general ways that an individual can experience psychic level openings that are likely to create imbalance: spontaneous (i.e., by accident), in a psychotic-like fashion, or as a beginning spiritual practitioner. In the case of spontaneous openings, the person can either “ride it out” (with or without the help of a professional therapist) or can choose to deliberately engage with the process “by taking up a contemplative discipline” (p. 139). Psychosis-like episodes may respond well to deep (probably Jungian) therapy because it aims to build the kind of psychic structures that translate psychosis-inducing material into a more assimilable form. Beginning spiritual practitioners are susceptible to kind of inflation or disorientation that requires structure-building and/or insight into the nature of the delusion experienced; Wilber observes that it may be best to temporarily break off spiritual practice if there is too much disorientation.

The Dark Night of the Soul experience, Wilber notes, can bring about profound despair that is often best addressed by reading about the experiences of others who have encountered the same painful experience in their path or via petitionary prayer.

Split-life goals are the result of living in a culture where spiritual values and cultural values start to diverge so much that the individual feels psychologically pulled apart. Wilber recommends trying to integrate spiritual and cultural life as much as possible rather than seeking an ascetic approach (presumably because it then becomes difficult to re-integrate at a later point).

When depression or anxiety arises at this stage, it is often best, Wilber says, to break off or lighten up on practice rather than intensifying practice, because this will likely result in psychic splitting.

Pranic disorders are those which have a somatic element based on psychological causes; Wilber's focus is on various bodily-oriented yogas designed to address bodily issues and possibly acupuncture.

Yogic illness (physical illness): Wilber recommends prevention when possible via purification of the body and/or treatment by restricting the intake of caffeine, sugar, drugs, etc.

Visser's general comment is that unbalances at this level tend to occur because the body and the soul are not sufficiently integrated; so the way to greater balance is through practices, therapies, etc., designed to promote integration.

The move from Point 6 to Point 7 on the process enneagram: *This move is like a transformative leap to a new, expanded level of consciousness where we “arrive” in a world that is of a whole different order than anything we have previously encountered—a world that can inspire awe but also bring about the kind of disorientation discussed in the previous section. This move is often associated with grace, with the kind of reaching down from above which “transports” an individual beyond their own self-conceived borders. While this move represents a significant expansion of awareness, it can be very disorienting, which is probably why Wilber recommends that the individual cease spiritual practice for a time, until he has had a chance to become oriented. Focusing instead on activities designed to enhance groundedness can be helpful for restoring equilibrium and a sense of normalcy.*

Type 7 on the personality enneagram: *Sevens instinctively seek lightness and avoid heaviness, because they resonate with this initial stage in the transpersonal process, where it is important to let go of focused or logical consciousness so that a more diffuse yet more ethereal kind of awareness can emerge. At the same time, there is a need to find a new way of checking in with all the aspects of one's being, so that the individual can literally pull himself together (rather than dissociating). This accounts for the tendency of Sevens to seek out diverse experiences and keep moving from experience to experience: they are laying down new “neural tracks” that allow them to link together the diverse aspects of their inner being by linking together their activities in the outside world. It is as though they cannot connect the dots within the psyche until they physically trace them out, working outside-in. By creating and projecting a vision in the outer world, they are creating a vision of the emergent self that is seeking to be born.*

Level 8: Subtle level. It's at this point that an awareness of the “archetypal forms, of subtle sounds, and audible illuminations” begins to emerge. These phenomena can be very impressive and powerful, but they are based on forms and are thus not part of the highest level of (formless) awareness. The problems that can arise include the failure to let go of more limited forms of identity, subtle illusions, false sense of realization.

About the failure to let go of more limited forms of identity (integration failure), Wilber notes that he is not aware of any solution other than to seek some means to relax the contraction (especially via insight), which will otherwise result in being overwhelmed by the powerful energies received at this level.

Regarding the subtle illusions we can experience (especially that of believing ourselves to be at a higher level than we actually are), he says that many traditions include ways to check our actual level of development, so we can avoid getting caught up in illusion.

Pseudo-realization seems to be Wilber's (albeit puzzling) way of referring to the extreme pain of being caught between the desire to continue onward and the desire not to; I believe he refers to what happens when energies become so intense that the individual feels as though he cannot go either forward or back (like a woman in childbirth at the moment of crowning). The only real option, he observes, is to continue one's practice.

The move from Point 7 to Point 8 on the process enneagram: *The transition from Point 7 to 8 is the movement from the gathering together of all the separate bits of the self from an external vantage point to the unification of all those bits into a coherent whole that is*

experienced as something internal, not external. So it can truly be likened to a birth, which is why there is the kind of extreme pressure that we can find difficult to bear: we are turning ourselves from outside-in to inside-out. Because we are still within the realm of form (although it is a very high level of form), we can mistake the forms we perceive—including our own form—as the ultimate reality, which is disastrous, because we then see ourselves as God and attempt to literally embody that force which, of course, we cannot. The results of failure are so serious that it is quite critical that we do not attempt to make this move before we have the kind of preparation that allows us to avoid missteps at this critical stage.

Type 8 on the personality enneagram: *This type represents the highest embodiment of spirit in form and as such is subject to the kind of internal pressures that make the achievement of a calm and steady approach to living quite a challenge. It is not that Eights are better or more advanced than other types but that they are subject to internal forces that require them to devote a considerable amount of time and energy learning methods of self-discipline, containment, and mastery. Should they decide not to do so, the consequences are often more serious than they would be for types who are not subject to this kind of internal pressure. However, the Eight who elects to take on the challenge has access to a much greater pool of energy with which to work. So the energy at Point 8 is a double-edged sword that can bring about either rapid development or decline.*

Level 9: Causal level. This is the level in which we are immersed in the unmanifest, where form is transcended and we make the final disidentification from the limited sense of self. Challenges revolve around the need to differentiate/detach oneself from all previous levels of self-understanding while at the same time to understand that these levels are perfect expressions of “unobstructed Wisdom” (p. 144), rather than defilements (violations) of that Wisdom. Wilber’s comments allude to the pull of the “inner teacher on the student, so as to eliminate any final source of separation; perhaps the simplest way to characterize this process is as the final surrender to the Infinite, such that even the subtlest of “I/Thou” differences disappear. At the same time, there is the need to acknowledge the creation as being entirely as it should be, not as something “less than” the Infinite than gives it life. It is the need to simultaneously surrender the creation while at the same time realizing its inherent goodness that makes this final transition such a challenge.

The move from Point 8 to Point 9 on the process enneagram: *This transition is one of the most mysterious on the enneagram, involving the move from Allness into Nothingness in a way that affirms the essential sameness of the two (which is why it represents the highest form of integration/synthesis). The individual who has internalized the Kosmos paradoxically becomes a single element in that Kosmos. In practical terms, it involves the realization that there is no ultimate state of achievement, individuality, enlightenment, etc., which is attainable by individuals in isolation: to continue developing, we must become part of something yet greater (which means finally relinquishing the separate “I” to completely experience the greater “thou”). But it also involves the understanding that the only way to integrate one’s individuality into something greater is to develop that individuality in the first place: to make the entire journey from Points 1 to 9 in a way that facilitates our ability to separate, differentiate, and individuate. If we hang back, refusing to make that journey (or making it in a perfunctory way), then the re-union at Point 9 means very little.*

Type 9 on the personality enneagram: *Type 9 is the one most identified with being and creative potential, as well as synthesis, harmony, and receptivity. But it’s also the type most identified with lack of motivation and indecision, as well as paralysis, blankness, and passivity. The former characteristics develop as the result of deep and genuine involvement at each stage of development; the latter characteristics develop as the result of shrinking*

back, apathy, and “just getting by.” This is why it’s especially important for Nines to get motivated, to act, and to actively reflect on their motives and actions as they proceed—so that they become increasingly able to consciously manifest the stamp of their uniqueness. In this way, they take the generic potential with which they are born and develop in a manner that gradually transforms them into self-aware individuals with the ability to act as co-creators in their ongoing development. In this way, Nines are the prototype for all of the types, because this is the goal of evolution: to discover and perfect our uniqueness in a way that enables us to serve life and to eventually integrate all that we have become into the Greater Wholeness of All That Is.

Wilber’s Nine Levels Summarized

Table 1 summarizes Wilber’s nine evolutionary stages, along with their corollaries on the process and personality enneagrams. They are arranged with the lowest level on the bottom and the highest on the top. One key thing to note is that while Wilber’s nine levels focus on the journey from birth to Enlightenment, we can use the same general approach to focus on any transformational process, e.g., the cycle of the human lifespan, of a transformation story, or a natural process such as photosynthesis.

The fact that we can easily see the relationship between his model, the process enneagram, and the personality enneagram suggests *a single underlying model of transformation*, rather than three separate approaches with limited parallels. For the enneagram, it suggests that there are not really two separate enneagrams, but one enneagram—a transformational enneagram—that can be interpreted in diverse ways.

As always when discussing this topic, I feel compelled to note that juxtaposing process with personality does not mean that the types with lower numbers are less evolved than the types with higher numbers, because the enneagram is not really a circle but a spiral such that we can be at any of an infinite number of levels. So an Eight on the 4th spiral is probably going to have a lot more learning to do than a Two on the 64th spiral!

Similarly, it’s important to observe that types working more with pre-personal energy are not at some sort of “evolutionary disadvantage” as compared to types working with personal or transpersonal energy. Rather, each type is at an advantage in different arenas of activity. One of the problems in traditionally-oriented spiritual paths is a disproportionate emphasis on the higher (transcendent) levels, resulting in the frequent neglect of the lower (immanent) areas. People who rise quickly often have trouble staying grounded and appreciating the joys of ordinary life (including kids, nature, and close relationships; those who are more tuned into the divine within daily life may not ascend as quickly, but they tend to do so in a way that is considerably better integrated. So there are advantages and disadvantages at each point on the circle.

Table 1. Parallels Among Nine Levels of Development			
Point/ Stage	Wilber's Levels of Development	Enneagram Stages of Development	Enneagram Points of View
TRANSPERSONAL			
9	<i>Causal level</i>	<i>Final synthesis</i>	<i>Balance & integration</i>
8	<i>Subtle level</i>	<i>Unified awareness</i>	<i>Fully-embodied living</i>
7	<i>Psychic level</i>	<i>Expanded awareness</i>	<i>Dynamic connections</i>
PERSONAL			
6	<i>Vision-logic</i>	<i>Panoramic intuition</i>	<i>Trusting one's intuitions</i>
5	<i>Formal-reflexive mind</i>	<i>Cognition</i>	<i>Understanding</i>
4	<i>Script/role thinking</i>	<i>Identity</i>	<i>"Role Me vs Real Me"</i>
PRE-PERSONAL			
3	<i>Representational mind</i>	<i>Competency</i>	<i>Concrete achievement</i>
2	<i>Emotional-sexual</i>	<i>Bonding</i>	<i>Emotional relationships</i>
1	<i>Sensori-physical</i>	<i>Orientation</i>	<i>Dual category definition</i>

Wilber's Nine Levels of Narcissism

One of the more interesting parts of Wilber's discussion in *Transformations of Consciousness* concerns the nine levels of narcissism. Wilber notes that narcissism is one of the most "confused and confusing" aspects of psychology (p. 150). He says that much of the confusion can be cleared up if we look at narcissism in terms of levels of development, as well as realizing that narcissism can be either normal or pathological.

One way to think of narcissism is a self-centrism or the "incapacity to take sufficient awareness of others" (p. 150). According to Wilber, normal narcissism is the amount of selfcentrism that is "structurally inevitable" for a given level of development. Here he is following Piaget in asserting that early fulcrums of development entail a great deal of narcissism simply because we have not yet acquired the mental structures that allow us to take the view of another. In normal development, we become progressively less narcissistic as we progress up the levels, "a process that continues until narcissism (self-centrism) finally disappears entirely in the causal realm" (p. 150).

At the same time, there exists the possibility of an abnormal or pathological narcissism at any level of development, wherein the self is overvalued and all else is under-valued. Pathological narcissism is a defense (and over-reaction to) hurts, humiliations, and social disapproval. Wilber notes, however, that in clinical psychology, the meaning of narcissism is very specific: a narcissistic disorder is defined as "a developmental arrest at the normal narcissism of Fulcrum-2" (p. 151).

I should note here that Fulcrum (Level) Two is associated with emotionality; and in an earlier (i.e., Freudian) era, it was associated with “female disorders” such as hysteria and psychosomatic complaints. So this made narcissism seem inherently abnormal, especially given the ethos of the day (wherein females were thought to be less rational, balanced, capable, etc., than males). The great developmental psychologist, Jean Piaget—who saw narcissism as a more neutral light (as something normal and inevitable through a certain phase of development)—came along much later, well after narcissism had become associated with pathology. As a result, nobody before Wilber seems to have particularly focused on distinguishing normal from abnormal narcissism.

Wilber maintains that narcissism can crop up at any level of development—but that it is only pathological *when it exceeds the normal narcissism we would expect for that level*. This idea is relevant to enneagram work because a lot of that work has historically been based on the idea that the nine types are pathological defenses arising out of an unhealthy but inevitable narcissism (egocentrism, which is the same thing as selfcentrism). Wilber is saying that while pathology is a possibility, it is by no means inevitable—that only when narcissism is inappropriate (given one’s level) is it problematic. This is why he is able to posit nine levels of development in a way that distinguishes healthy from unhealthy development.

Wilber’s Levels and Riso-Hudson’s Levels

Now we can take a look at the differences between Wilber’s approach and that used by Don Riso to formulate his nine levels of development. Both models use nine steps to describe the degree to which self-centrism is evident, such that at lower levels are maximally self-centric while each successive level is less self-centric.

However, in Wilber’s approach, healthy development is the norm (with pathology being a possibility) while in Riso-Hudson’s approach, pathological development is the norm (because any degree of selfcentrism is seen as unhealthy). Thus, in Wilber’s scheme, all levels can manifest in either a healthy or unhealthy way whereas in Riso-Hudson’s scheme, all levels except the last (where there is zero self-centrism) are associated with some degree of pathology (even those in the “healthy” category).

Another difference between these models is that Wilber’s is *developmental* (focusing on the normal progression from lower to higher levels as a function of human development) while Riso-Hudson’s is *descriptive* (focusing on states of consciousness without reference to a developmental arc). The tacit assumption in Riso-Hudson’s model is therefore that we are talking about the consciousness of a fully developed adult, such that the descriptions we see at the lower levels would indicate a case of arrested development. While such a model is useful for pinpointing levels of pathology by enneagram type, it is not strictly speaking a hierarchy, because as Wilber notes, in a true hierarchy, the upper levels must enfold and include the lower levels. This only works if the hierarchy describes a normal line of development—cognitive development, emotional development, or spiritual development. While there can be pathologies at any level, the pathologies are not the hierarchy. So we must start with a path of normal development in which pathological development is a potential departure from the norm.

Riso-Hudson’s original model describes pathologies associated with different levels of development without describing the healthy version of each level. As a result, it is incomplete. However, it is impossible to fault Riso for that incompleteness, for his model was developed at a time when any departure from the idea of type as pathology was virtually inconceivable. Even Riso-Hudson’s modest degree of optimism (the idea that there could be some levels that were healthier than others) inspired a firestorm of criticism from Oscar

Ichazo in *Letters to the School*, published in 1988. Anyone interested in moving in a more positive direction would clearly have hesitated at that point.

Wilber, however, operated under no such constraints. So his hierarchical approach assumes the existence of one or more developmental lines, wherein pathological development is a departure from the norm. However, it lacks one major feature: the ability to identify how different personality types progress through different levels of development. And that is where an enneagram-based model can be useful. But it must be a true developmental model based on the premise that each of the types develop somewhat differently, according to differences connected with its core motivation.

However, while Riso-Hudson's "levels" model currently lacks that ability, Riso and Hudson have another nine-tiered scheme that clearly has the potential to be a fully-fledged developmental model: their strata-based model discussed towards the end of *Wisdom of the Enneagram* (pp. 371-377). This model provides nine steps designed to help people "excavate the true self" by progressively peeling back the layers (strata) of the outer self to see what lies beneath. This peeling back process progresses from outer behavior to the innermost core of the psyche. It is thus potentially compatible with the sequence described by the process enneagram, which involves the movement from Point 0 (ignorance) to Point 9 (realization). If we look at the journey in terms of three major phases, during the first major phase, we are just getting our feet wet: look at habitual attitudes (Point 1), behaviors (Point 2), and motivations (Point 3), in an initial effort to get a handle on who we really are. During the second phase, we move deeper; and as we do, the territory gets rougher: we encounter underlying affects (Point 4), libininal energies (Point 5), and finally come to the Dark Night of the Soul (Point 6). During the third phase, we experience resolution: encountering the void (Point 7), personal Being (Point 8), and Universal Being (Point 9).

The parallels are very easy to see for Points 6 – 9; but with some tweaking, there are ways of linking each of the strata with each of Wilber's levels of development (or with the each point/stage on the process enneagram). For example, I would think of the first step as linked with our avowed standards (Point 1), the second as linked with personal attitudes (Point 2), and the third as linked with actual actions (Point 3). The focus on underlying affect at Point 4 already makes sense, as does the focus on libidinal energies at Point 5 (once we think of its link to Point 8); and the Dark Night of the Soul at Point 6 is akin to the encounter with the Dweller on the Threshold as described by Bernier (as well as the existential anxiety described by Wilber). Voidness at Point 7 is akin to the sense of wide-open space associated with Point 7; personal Being at Point 8 is akin to the unification of Being associated with Point 8; and Universal Being at Point 9 is akin to the ultimate integration or synthesis associated with Point 9. This model could be further explored and refined; my purpose at this point is simply to demonstrate the feasibility of developing the strata model in a way that could be eventually tied to other models (e.g., Wilber's). Table 2 compares Wilber's "Levels" model, the Process Enneagram "Stages" model, and Riso and Hudson's "Strata" model.

I once asked Russ Hudson about the relationship between the Riso-Hudson's original "levels" model and the strata and he said they were two different models; that is also what is stated in *Wisdom of the Enneagram*. However, I was always interested in better understand the relationship between the two, because I believed that they had to be related, although it was hard to see how. Now I realize that, as noted above, that the "levels" model is descriptive while the "strata" model is potentially developmental, although I believe it would be particularly valuable if it were framed as a progression towards deeper levels of knowing (as opposed to a progression from the "false" toward the "real").

Next we'll look at two techniques—dreamwork and meditation—that Wilber uses to address potential pathologies at each level of the hierarchy.

Table 2. Parallels between Wilber's, Rhodes' & Riso-Hudson's Nine Levels			
Level	Wilber's "Levels" Model	Rhodes' Enneagram Process Stage	Riso-Hudson's Strata Model
TRANSPERSONAL LEVELS			
9	<i>Causal level</i>	<i>Final synthesis</i>	<i>Universal Being</i>
8	<i>Subtle level</i>	<i>Unified awareness</i>	<i>Personal Being</i>
7	<i>Psychic level</i>	<i>Expanded awareness</i>	<i>The Void</i>
PERSONAL LEVELS			
6	<i>Vision-logic</i>	<i>Intuition</i>	<i>Dark Night of the Soul</i>
5	<i>Formal-reflexive mind</i>	<i>Cognition</i>	<i>Libininal energies</i>
4	<i>Script/role thinking</i>	<i>Identity</i>	<i>Underlying affects</i>
PRE-PERSONAL LEVELS			
3	<i>Representational mind</i>	<i>Competency</i>	<i>Motivations</i>
2	<i>Emotional-sexual</i>	<i>Bonding</i>	<i>Behavior</i>
1	<i>Sensori-physical</i>	<i>Orientation</i>	<i>Habitual attitudes</i>

Dreamwork & Meditation at the Nine Levels

Wilber's view of dreamwork is mainly as a way of means of detecting and working through psychopathology; his view of meditation is mainly as a way of developing higher-level faculties. However, in this discussion, he indicates that, depending on the level and the context, either technique may be helpful in helping us progress.

Regarding dreams, Wilber says that in therapy, the therapist sometimes tries out different levels of interpreting dream material to see what resonates with the client; the dream is decathected (relieved of its emotional charge) when we correctly determine the level at which its message is directed. Wilber believes that, the more developed an individual is," the higher the level of interpretation that is likely to strike a responsive chord." and goes on to caution us that "even the most highly developed individuals are by no means immune from lower-level messages" (p. 152). He says that some dream material may be interpretable on multiple levels at the same time.

In Wilber's view, unlike dreamwork, meditation is generally a tool not for resolving psychopathology but for "facilitating the emergence, growth, and development of the higher structures of consciousness" (p. 153). He notes, however, that when a person begins to meditate, this often triggers the re-emergence of suppressed material and the need to work with "uncovering" techniques (psychotherapy, dreamwork, etc.). As a result, he sees meditation is "contra-indicated" at Levels 1 and 2 because our psychic structures are not

well-developed enough to bear the stresses involved. Meditation may be potentially helpful at Level 3, but he recommends forms that do not cause excessive internal stress (e.g., following the breath as opposed to meditation on Zen koans). Although meditation at Levels 4 and 5 is also potentially helpful for development, Wilber cautions us to watch out for complications caused by role confusion (Level 4) or the tendency to over-universalize one's insights (Level 5). At Level 6, where existential anxiety comes to a head, meditation can be used to allay anxiety. He notes, however, that many individuals at this [highly-mental] level are uninterested (and suspicious of) meditation, so it is only helpful to those who are open to its benefits—who tend to (ironically) be those who are less well-adjusted. He does not discuss meditation at Levels 7, 8, and 9, presumably because he is focusing on its therapeutic uses; it's obvious from other writings (e.g., Chapter 12 of *The Atman Project*) that unless contraindicated by other factors, Wilber sees meditation at any level after One and Two as a key tool for bringing about an expansion of consciousness.

Commentary

The personality enneagram is a horizontally-oriented enneagram interpretation based on looking at nine different ways of viewing the world; Ken Wilber's Nine Levels of Development is a vertically-oriented system describing nine levels of consciousness that represent nine stages of vertical development. It presents us with a truly hierarchy of normal development along with deviations the result in potential abnormalities at any levels and proposed treatment modalities should such abnormalities arise. One of the points most relevant to enneagram work is Wilber's observation that abnormalities can arise at any point during development, even the transpersonal levels. This means that many of these abnormalities have little to do with ego or ego defenses. So the assumption in enneagram work that ego is the chief obstacle to spiritual progress is not borne out by Wilber's theory or observations.

However, those of us who work with the enneagram can potentially add much to Wilber's integral approach. First, the personality enneagram provides a way to see nine paths to development, each based on a unique core motivation. Second, the process enneagram provides a way to envision how we move up the hierarchy in a spiral fashion, because each point on the enneagram circle is like a step upward on a spiral staircase (Fig. 1). Although this figure shows just one transformational spiral, the move from one level of consciousness to the next would obviously involve many, many circuits on the spiral. So the process enneagram can act as a means of linking horizontal types with Wilber's vertical hierarchy of development. Potentially, both Riso-Hudson's "levels" model and Riso and Hudson's "strata" model could provide additional insights into the interaction between type characteristics and our level of development, assuming modifications that make it possible to focus on pathology in the larger context of normal development.

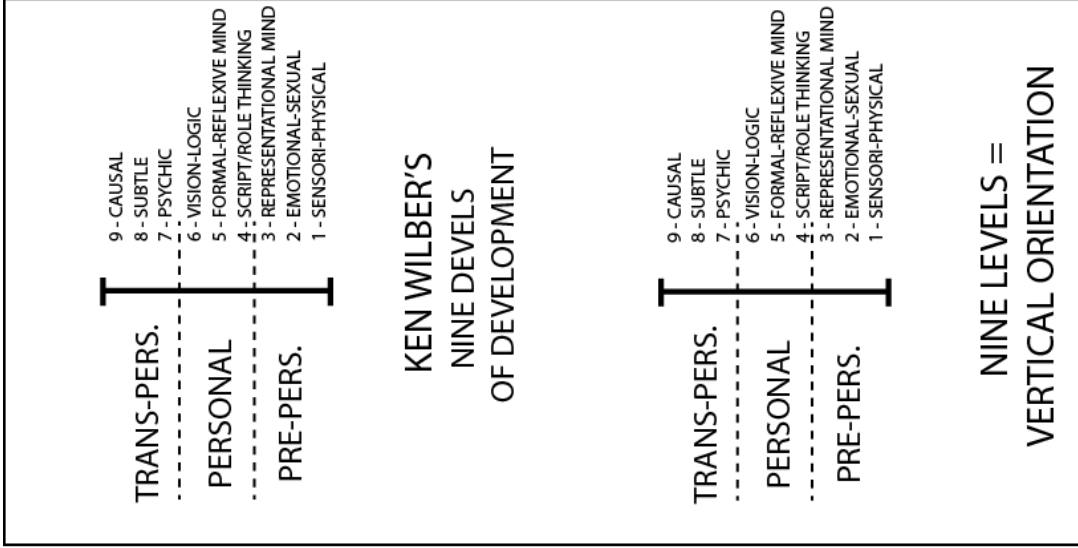
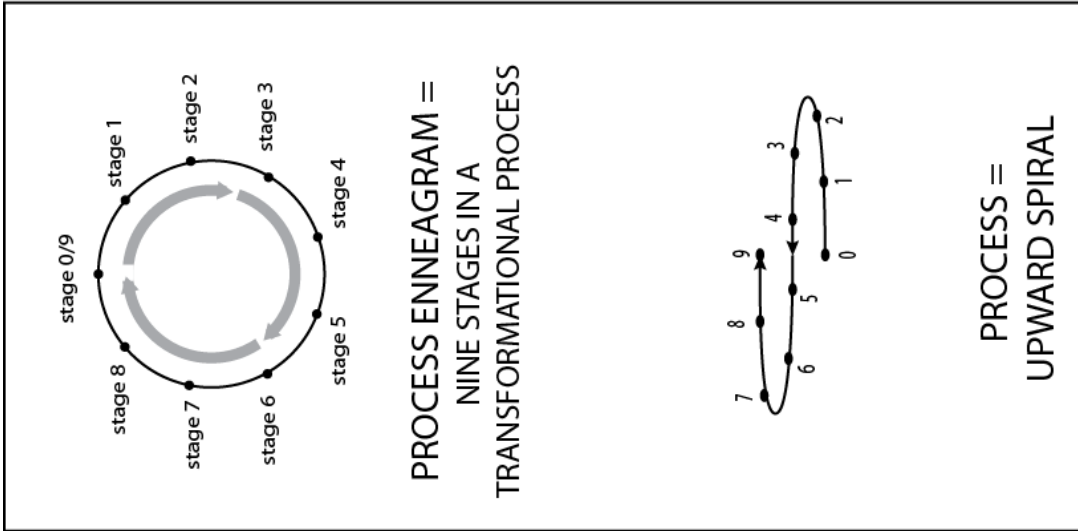
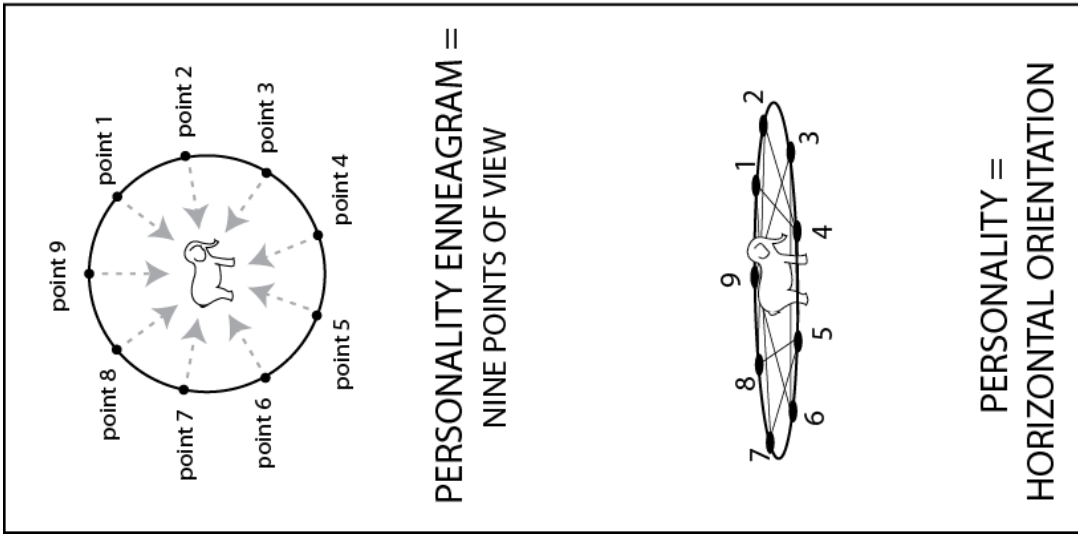


FIG. 1 - HOW THE PROCESS ENNEAGRAM SPIRAL LINKS THE HORIZONTAL PERSONALITY POINTS OF VIEW TO WILBER'S VERTICAL LEVELS